

RSA: “We will not stop helping”

SMC begins regular production, distribution of free nutribuns to feed city's poor via food kiosks

San Miguel Corporation (SMC) makes good on a promise to continue helping the urban poor cope with the continuing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. It has started implementing a plan, together with non-profit groups, to distribute free nutribuns to disadvantaged communities via feeding kiosks at identified Petron service stations.

SMC President and Chief Operating Officer Ramon S. Ang said that the program officially kicked off yesterday, Sept. 22, with initially, four Petron stations serving as staging areas for the food relief effort.

The nutribuns are baked at the Petron stations, while partner NGOs and local government units (LGUs) take care of distributing these to nearby poor communities.



“About a month ago, we announced a new initiative to make nutribuns available to the poor, to help keep them from hunger as our country continues to deal with the health crisis. I’m happy to report that the first four Petron nutribun baking stations are now operational,” Ang said.

“Despite our economy already partially open, many less-fortunate Filipinos continue to have limited access to food, resources, and livelihood. As much as possible, we don’t want anyone to go hungry. This is one of the ways we felt we could help tide some of them over, by providing

nutrient-packed and energy-rich nutribuns, made with care and malasakit by our people,” Ang added.

The pilot sites, located in Caloocan, Malolos, Tondo, and Payatas, will produce an estimated total 8,000 nutribuns for distribution every week.

SMC first revived the nutribun—originally developed in the 1970s to fight hunger and malnutrition among schoolchildren—in March, when the enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) was implemented to stem the spread of the virus.

The shutdown of virtually all economic activity led to limited food access, and one of SMC’s first initiatives was to produce and distribute nutribuns for the poor.

According to Ang, more sites will be added, as soon as special baking ovens are built and installed at other Petron gas stations. The company is prioritizing implementation in areas close to disadvantaged communities.

Ang related that the idea for this new food relief program started when, on his way home from the office one afternoon, he observed many street children begging on the streets.

“I talked to a traffic aide and asked him to distribute some money to the kids, many of whom could not have been that much older than my own grandchildren. But I knew that money would easily run out. So I hope with this simple initiative, we can help make sure that people will not go hungry, and that there will always be something nutritious to eat,” he related.

“For as long as there’s a pandemic and, we will not stop looking for ways that San Miguel can help out,” Ang added.

Ang also emphasized the importance of working with NGOs such as Gawad Kalinga and Munting Hiling, as well as LGUS, to help ensure the initiative’s success.

“Throughout this whole crisis, in all our food relief efforts, the help of our partner NGOs and the LGUs, has been invaluable in ensuring that our food donations reach those who really need it. We’re grateful for their support and are now counting on them again to help make sure that help gets to those who needs it the most with this new initiative,” Ang said.

Since March, San Miguel Corporation, under Ang, has mounted the largest food relief effort in the company’s, and perhaps the country’s history—with food donations reaching well over half a billion pesos.

Apart from donating its own food products—fresh meats and poultry, canned goods, dairy and baked goods, coffee, biscuits—as well as rice, the company also donated flour to LGUs in and around Metro Manila for local bakers to turn into free or discounted bread.

It has also provided free hot meals to all locally-stranded individuals (LSIs) at the Manila North Harbor and the Rizal Coliseum. The company provided three hot meals per day everyday, until all LSIs were able to go home.

SMC has long been identified addressing the issue of hunger. Under its flagship corporate social responsibility (CSR) program, called the SMC Better World Communities initiative, it converted an old warehouse in Tondo into a learning center that also functions as a feeding center and food bank for Manila's poorest communities.

Dubbed Better World Tondo, the facility has served as a staging area for the company's numerous food relief efforts in Metro Manila throughout the COVID-19 crisis. Volunteers at Better World Center have prepared meals for LSIs and will also help distribute free nutribuns for SMC's latest project.